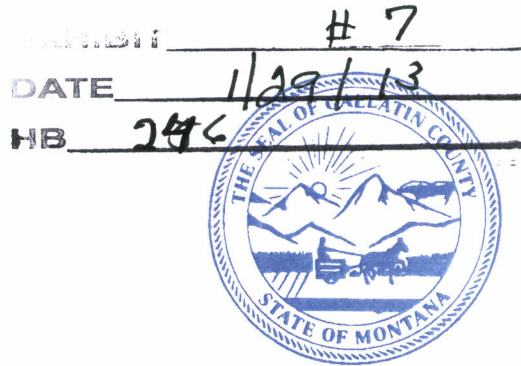


State of Montana

County of Gallatin

Bozeman



January 29, 2013

Representative Liz Bangerter
House Local Government Committee Chair

Madam Chair and distinguished Representatives,

On behalf of the Gallatin County Commission and we would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 246 introduced by Representative White. After carefully reviewing this proposed legislation it is the position of a majority of the Gallatin County Commissioners to oppose to HB 246. One Commissioner believed we should take no position on the bill.

This bill it does one thing; it requires the government approve a real estate transaction between two private parties. A conservation easement is a transfer of a property right, just like the transfer of a mineral right.

If we going to begin requiring the government approve property transfers on one type of property because of their philosophical, political or ideological beliefs, then how long before other types of property transfers are subject to governmental approval? Are we going to require government approval before an individual can sell their mineral rights to a mining company or oil company? Are we going to require government approval before a private individual sells property to a church?

Regardless of your feelings about conservation easements, this bill is an attack on private property rights, it sets a dangerous precedent, and we hope you will vote no on HB 246.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me: Michael Harris, 311 West Main, Room 304, Bozeman, MT 59715, 406-582-3178, mike.harris@gallatin.mt.gov.

Again, thank you for your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Michael Harris
Legislative Liaison